

VIRGINIA'S NEGLECTED CORNERS KEY TO STATE'S FUTURE PROGRESS

VIRGINIANS AWAKENING TO VALUE OF GOOD ROADS

James W. Brooks Says People of State Are "Coming Back" to Develop Corners.

HOW BONDS CAN BE REDEEMED

Speaker Says Stop Waste on 185,000 Farms, Due to Bad Roads, and Money Will Roll Into State Treasury.

Progress of the railroad, telegraph, telephone and the wireless systems during the past fifty years was recounted forcibly by James W. Brooks, director of the American Highway Educational Bureau, in an address before the Virginia Good Roads Association at Roanoke. He said in the realm of transportation of thought and speech, or message one to another, we began with the runner or mounted courier. Today that runner or mounted courier has been translated into 32,000,000 miles of wire, running into the heart of more than 10,000,000 homes and offices and carrying every twenty-four hours more than 32,000,000 messages. The energies of our people have expanded from shore to shore, and having reached the ultimate in that direction, we are now turning back for a more intensive development of inner spaces—spaces that have been long neglected as we have followed in the wake of steel and steam transcontinental enterprises.

Mr. Brooks pointed out that in our boyhood days we raced from one fence corner to another looking for a good playground, the next always looking more attractive than the one we were in. That, to use a simple illustration, is just what we have been doing in a national way. We have kept up this chase until we have raced into every corner there is. We now discover that the corners we have neglected are worth while after all, so we are coming back. We are coming back in just such work as you are doing in the Virginia Good Roads Association, for you have set your hands to the development of those neglected corners.

Changes Along the Road.

Mr. Brooks' subject was "The Changing Road," and he said as we come back we are met by many changes. For instance, the old town delivery has blossomed out into a multitude of garages, and motor accessory dealers have spread all over the place, until the old harnessmaker wonders where he is.

I doubt if very many of us could recall the brand of axle grease used yesterday; instead, our heads are packed with facts about gasoline.

We no longer drive in the pond to tighten our tires, we turn in at the garage and light a cigar while someone else turns on the air.

We have jumped from horse shoes to skid chains, and shifted our power from horse-collar to a gasoline tank.

As we speed along we read the time on a neat little clock at our feet instead of squinting at the sun.

We find the wagon town of South Bend has been swallowed up by the motor town of Detroit; and even dressmakers have been whirled into the change by more attractive wages for nimble fingers in "dolling up" the limousine.

And finally, we never dreamed we would like to see the day when the country road would need a depot in town, but that is exactly what has happened, for I can take you to highway freight and passenger stations in not a few cities.

Country Road a Public Utility.

The point I want to impress is this: That under the sheer force of economic progress the country road is being forced into a commanding position as a public utility.

In turning back to these neglected areas we have reached a point where it is now every State to its own task. That is the meaning of your meeting here today; that is the meaning of the Virginia Good Roads Association. With these facts in mind—with these evidences towards a greater use of the highway—we come back to the problem at our own door.

For the sake of approaching the subject from a new angle, we may say that farming is manufacturing. We call it agriculture, because it has to do with the soil. But it is manufacturing none the less—making corn, wheat, oats and tobacco and so on. The only difference is that nature is a partner in the plant, works on the job as the seasons come and go, and draws no dividends.

He would be a very foolish manufacturer indeed who would locate his

factory in such position as to be unable to reach his marketing or delivery point dependably and regularly. And the manufacturer who would permit the surface of the thoroughfare over which he hauled his product to remain in a condition that would require an unnecessary amount of time in hauling—time that otherwise could be applied to greater production—would soon find himself out of business. That is the situation of the farmer on a bad road.

We may assume that Virginia is a vast open air factory. Upon looking in we find a total ground area or floor space of more than 25,000,000 acres. So far, you have put about 10,000,000 acres of that space into farm production and about 8,000,000 more in lumber, leaving an idle floor space or ground area of more than 7,000,000 acres. If that were in production today what would it mean to Virginia?

Idle Acres Challenge All Men.

I submit in all earnestness that every idle acre in Virginia today is a challenge to business men—men of large affairs—to lend their aid in getting it into full production. And there is no other way to do this except by making a better use of the road, as you now propose to do.

From the standpoint of the road and its relation to industry, it is a curious fact that our way back to neglected opportunities is being lighted by the fires of industry which we kindled on our way out. This truth is expressed in the pressure which now comes from industrial and commercial centers for the widening and lengthening of supply zones through the development of roads. It is not so much how many railroads run through a town today that make it great as how many good highways lead out of it. And we have come to understand that it is just as essential to the welfare of the people who are engaged in our commercial centers to lay a good and dependable economic basis as it is to lay gas pipe and meter main.

Now, if you will permit me to follow the changing road to its logical conclusion, so far as it concerns the problems which you have in hand, your next stump will be the matter of finance. It is generally assumed that this phase will be handled through an issuance of bonds. That has been understood, but when the proposition comes before the Legislature for definite action, the point back of the proposed issues will be "where will we get the money to redeem the bonds?"

Will it increase our tax burdens? That will be a very direct question coming from the back districts.

You can say this—and say it without fear of successful contradiction—that you propose to get the money for the redemption of the bonds out the roads themselves.

Stop Waste.

That—I grant you—is an abstract statement. But if it were possible for you to marshal all the items of waste which now lie at the bottom of the unsurfaced road—roads that take an excessive toll in vehicle operation—and add that to the losses that come to agriculture and industry as a result of transportation restrictions, you will find, I am quite sure, an astonishing total—a total that will far more than cover the cost of your new roads.

You have in your open-air factory 185,000 farms, or farm units in the plant. I think you will agree with me that bad roads—counting the days that they are wholly impassable and other days on which travel is difficult, cause an average time loss of one hour per day to each one of these farms. That means a total time loss of 185,000 hours, or more than 23,000 working days. It means that that your roads are wasting 98,000 working days every week.

Put a stop to this form of waste—to say nothing of uneconomic vehicle operation—and you will very soon find where to get the money for the redemption of your bonds. When analyzed from this standpoint we can see very clearly how a highway bond becomes an opportunity instead of an obligation, and how we can use it as a financial lever to throw the road over into a new position where it can pay its own way out. While the money goes into the regular channel through your State Treasury to redeem the obligation, it will begin coming back to you in greater volume on the profit side of the account.

The results of this enterprise must be taken across the door sill to every hearthstone. Unless you do that in the form of happier circumstances for the people, you will short circuit the whole project, for there in the home is where you want to land ultimately with all the inspirational powers which you can generate. When you do that, rural decay will stop, youth will go back to nature's workshop and the whole of Virginia blend into a bright new picture.

We talk about land reclamation,

the drainage of swamps and so on. You are proposing to apply that same principle to community reclamation. You propose to drain the sloughs of despond in Virginia by the construction of modern roads.

We talk about harnessing our natural resources, about converting our waterfalls into light, heat and power. You are proposing to tap the greatest source of power of all for public good, a source that has never failed the nation or the State in the past, a source that will not fail in the future—the heart of Virginia.

Tribute to Country Road.

My friends, I hold an affection for the road, for which I make no apology, and I thank God every day of my life for the country end of the line. It is on that end where most of us started—barefoot in summer, copper-toed in winter—with lessons on the right conduct of life from humble parents that no university in the land, however great, can ever surpass.

On that end of the line we find no strange doctrines—no angry mobs clamoring against establishing order, but instead, the fountain of pure Americanism.

It is high time indeed that we go back to that end of the line for our own regeneration, and as we retrace our steps to begin this process of rebuilding, I could offer no more fitting text for the message you are going to take with you to the people concerning the road than this:

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the temple."

COMMITTEE IS SELECTED TO AWARD SCHOLARSHIP

Three Prominent Men to Decide Winner in Firestone Good Roads Essay Contest.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Aug. 17.—Three distinguished judges, each widely known in his individual field, will constitute a national committee to award the four years university scholarship offered for the best essay written on the subject "Good Roads and Highway Transport" in a national contest among high-school pupils conducted under the auspices of the highway transport education committee which has headquarters here.

According to an announcement of the committee, the judges will be Dean A. N. Johnson, department of engineering, University of Maryland, chairman; Hartford Powell, Jr., editor of Collier's Weekly, and C. H. Huston, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Commerce and President of the Lee Highway Association.

Upon the decision of these judges rests the hopes and ambitions of tens of thousands of high-school boys and girls from every State in the union. During the last six weeks offices of high-school principals and city and State superintendents of schools have been deluged with essays and manuscripts. These now are being sifted and sorted, the best from each State being chosen by a process of elimination. It is these best essays that will be presented to the national judges, together with the best essay submitted from the District of Columbia, Porto Rico and Alaska respectively.

The scholarship is the gift of H. S. Firestone, of Akron, O., a member of the committee, offered at the request of his associates on the committee. The contest represents the first renewal of the Firestone scholarship, the first having been won by Miss Katherine Butterfield, of Weiser, Idaho, who attended school last year under its provisions.

Arrangements are being made by the highway committee to have each of the fifty-one essays typed uniformly and given a serial number for the consideration of the judges. In that manner the judges will be unaware of the sex of the writer, or the section of the country from which the essay comes. They will, therefore, be swayed by no motives except the inherent qualities of the manuscripts themselves.

After the judges have eliminated all but the best of the fifty-one they will read, a meeting will be called at Washington, when they will again go carefully over the essays and make their final decision. It is believed the result will be known in time for the successful contestant to enter college the coming school year, if the winner is a senior student. In the event the national prize is given any pupil other than a senior in high school, the award of the scholarship will be deferred until the winner is ready to take advantage of it. The scholarship has a value of not less than \$4,000.

VIRGINIA ROAD BUILDING BEING DONE AT LOW PRICE

Availability of Road Materials in Sections of State a Factor for Saving.

BIG CONTRACTS SAVE MONEY

Bid for 11.1 Miles of Concrete Road \$25,000 Lower Than Lowest Bids on Same Projects in Separate Contracts.

If it were possible to compare the price paid for a mile of a certain type of road construction in Virginia with the cost per mile of the same class of construction in other States, it would be found that road building in Virginia is being carried on at as low a mileage cost as the majority of her sister States. This is due in a large measure to the availability of road materials in many sections of the State. It is practically impossible to compare prices per mile with other States, or even in the same State, as the conditions are vastly different in a majority of cases.

The State Highway Department can compare unit prices with those of other States, and this is being done through the interchange of reports of contract awards by Virginia and North Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee and many other States. These show the cost of labor, cost per yard for excavating, cost per yard of concrete, etc. It would be difficult to make intelligible to the average layman the difference between \$2.40 and \$2.95 per square yard of concrete pavement and 48 and 64 cents per cubic yard for regular excavation, but to the engineer any appreciable variation in price calls forth an inquiry as to the reason why.

Larger Contracts Save Money.

In addition to candid admission of the State Highway Department and the knowledge which any layman would have that the building of short sections or piecemeal construction which is being carried on in the State under the present financial system is costing more than the same road would cost were the State Highway Department in position to let larger contracts. Bids submitted at a recent letting gave positive proof of this. A section of 11.1 miles of concrete road was advertised as two separate projects and as one contract. The low bid on the entire mileage was \$25,000 lower than the lowest bids on the separate projects. This letting also indicated the reduction in construction costs which have occurred in less than twelve months, the cost being \$11,000 per mile lower than the cost of concrete road construction under almost identical conditions and with the same specifications. Part of this reduction in cost was due to the fact that the 1921 bid was for twice the mileage of the 1920 bid. The contractor is in position to place on the larger contract larger and more expensive equipment, which will enable him to do the work more economically.

As a further example that larger contracts bring lower prices, the unit price given in a bid on concrete surfacing only on an eleven-mile project, as compared with bid for surfacing one and one-half miles with concrete, showed a saving on this item alone of \$6,300 per mile.

NEW YORK IS CONSTRUCTING 500 MILES OF HARD ROADS

The State of New York plans to construct 500 miles of hard-surfaced roads during the present year, according to Herbert S. Sisson, State Commissioner of Highways. Contracts have already been let for 387 miles at a total cost of \$14,883,800. The completed mileage to date is placed at 138 miles. New projects for which contracts will be let August 12 and 14 include 61.13 miles of bituminous macadam pavement, 0.5 of a mile of asphalt block, 3.62 miles of bitulithic, 1.5 miles of combined re-enforced concrete and bituminous macadam, 26.3 miles of re-enforced concrete and 1.31 miles of re-enforced concrete and brick.

The highway program as outlined in the Hewitt law passed at the last session of the New York Legislature calls for the completion of about 3,000 miles of highway in the next six years. "Unless something unforeseen occurs," says Commissioner Sisson, "there is no reason why this program cannot be completed within the time contemplated."